

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (SAW)**

DRAFT MINUTES

December 4, 2014

9:30 a.m.

**Foggy's Steakhouse & Lounge
E7876 West State Highway M-28
Christmas, Michigan 49862**

MEMBERS PRESENT

**Lee Murray, Chairman, At-Large Representative
Bill Manson, MSA Region III Representative, Grand Rapids
Jim Duke, MSA, Region I Representative, Munising
Don Britton, At-Large Representative
Rich Filley, Trail Sponsors Representative
Bill Lucas, At-Large Representative**

DNR STAFF PRESENT

**Ron Olson, Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), Lansing
Jason Fleming, PRD, Lansing
Jacklin Blodgett, PRD, Lansing
John Morey, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Gaylord
Ron Yesney, PRD, Marquette
Dan Moore, Jr., PRD, Newberry
Loretta Cwalinski, Finance and Operations Division (FOD), Gaylord**

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

**Mike Beard, Bader & Sons
Ed Besonen, Bader & Sons
Joe Kuchnicki, Moosejaw Trails, Harbor Springs
Jim Dickie, Chesaning Area Snowmobilers Association
Ron Corbett, President, MSA
Denny Zoet, WMSC, Wayland Club
Jay Wright, Chippewa Snow Chasers
John Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails (PIST)
Kaye Houk, PIST
Maryann Noah, MSA Region 1
David Low, Region 3, West Michigan Council
Stu Volkers, Region 1, Eastern UP Council, Les Cheneaux
Keith Churill, Alger Sorva, Hiawathaland Trail Association
Keith Lynch, UP Snophlyers, Hiawathaland Trail Association (HLTA)
Stephen King, Michigan ?
Mark Essenburg, TNT Club, Trenary**

Dave Miskus, HLTA, Moose Country
Greg Nault, Moose Country
Rick Brown, SMSC
Dave McGrath, Hiawathaland
Don Reed, Seney
Karen Middendorp, MSA Staff
Robert Stein, Munising

WELCOME

Chairman Murray called the SAW meeting to order at 9:30 a.m., December 4, 2014, in Christmas, Michigan. He welcomed everyone, introduced himself, as did the Workgroup and attendees.

Mr. Ron Olson, PRD Chief introduced himself and commended the SAW for their input to the program and appreciated the working relationship.

Chair Murray mentioned with deep sadness that SAW member Al Green passed away since the last SAW meeting. Anyone interested in receiving by email the write-up in MSA's magazine about Mr. Green can contact ~~Marie Gregitsky~~ **MSA**. SAW members shared their sentiments and stories and everyone agreed Al was a valuable member of SAW and will be truly missed.

Motion was made by Mr. Lucas, seconded by Mr. Britton that the Chair be allowed to add to the agenda as necessary. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Additional Agenda items requested, under Old Business:

Lean Discussion Update – Mr. Fleming

After 'Chains' add Update for Rogers City – Mr. Fleming

After 'Land Use Order' add Groomer Maintenance Workshop – Mr. Lucas

At the end of the month four member's terms will expire – Mr. Filley, Mr. Manson, Mr. Duke and Mr. Britton. **Chair Murray** asked these members to send an e-mail to Mr. Fleming of their wishes to continue on the SAW, and to please do so this week. Mr. Fleming will draft a letter to MTAC with those requests.

MINUTES

In review of the minutes from the October 14, 2014 SAW meeting, **Mr. Manson** noted a correction of the last name spelling for Mr. Dayle Declark in two places; clarification on page 2 regarding request by the Chair for speaker's names – he mentioned he would like to see on the Agendas in general not only the topic to be discussed, but the person who will be leading the discussion. (That particular meeting did not have an additional speaker to be added); in the middle of page 3, question from Mr. Manson – clarification on the acronym FRD is Forest Resources Division; regarding the Groomer Driver

Workshop –remove the sentence ‘Saturday the 18th...Voelkers in Lake City’; and finally, Page 6 next to last item the December meeting was decided to begin at 9:30 a.m. not 11:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Britton to accept the corrected minutes. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Chair Murray asked if there could be a plaque made and presented to Mr. Green’s wife in his honor. Winter Warriors are going to have a ride in his memory. There will be a letter drafted by Mr. Fleming to be presented at that ride.

OLD BUSINESS

Lean Discussion Update – **Mr. Fleming** explained there are seven action teams that are part of this process for review, one of them being assisting with the handbook that Mr. Green was also a member of. They meet once a month by conference call which usually takes one hour. There will likely be major changes taking place next year, so Mr. Fleming would like some recommendations for a replacement on that team.

Mr. Manson said he would like to be that person. **Chairman Murray, appointed Mr. Manson to the group.**

Chains – **Mr. Fleming** said there have been requests in the past, but the problem lies with inconsistencies. He doesn’t have a problem adding them, so next year they will be added for Maintenance Grants to allow purchasing under equipment.

Rogers City Update – **Mr. Fleming** said that he has not seen the signed document; it is not going to happen this year but will be done and ready for next season.

GPS Units – **Mr. Fleming** said that they are continuing to research units, and it may not be done this season, but their intent is to get them in next year – making progress.

Equipment SAW/DNR subcommittee Update Oil sample – **Mr. Fleming** said their hopes were to get these out by February, but have not set up a meeting date yet. Hopefully in the next three to four weeks they’ll complete a Purchase Order.

Permanent Easement Update – **Mr. Fleming** said he has not had any feedback yet, but within the next couple months the criteria on the application should be reviewed and program should be in place soon. Criteria are based on several things. The process was discussed, and suggestions were made. Criteria will be given to grant sponsors and used as a separate application process. Hopefully it will be posted by mid-January.

Mr. Britton would like to apply for funding for Trail 8, Chatham to Gwinn. Ownership is still in question, but there is current research being done. **Mr. Yesney** explained their situation and roadblocks – he feels this should be a high priority and feels they are getting pretty close to approaching the correct owner. **Mr. Britton** would like to request

\$50,000 to do this research and subsequent purchase. **Mr. Yesney** added some history of the various owners and purchases before DNR purchased it, and unfortunately there are gaps and remaining questions. Discussion continued.

Chair Murray said that he would like to see the SAW Draft minutes first, and then he will forward them to Mr. Fleming after his initial review. **Mr. Fleming** added also that after the Draft Agenda is reviewed, it will begin to be created for the meeting. If members could see the agenda a few weeks before the meeting that would be helpful, and additional items can be added as needed.

Historical Bridge – **Mr. Fleming** mentioned the difficulty from the State Historical Society regarding a historical bridge on the North Eastern State Trail. A news release will be coming out regarding the current bridge closure which is west of Millersburg near Trail 9. No time frame for repair or replacement has been established.

Mr. John Houk said there was concern mentioned over frost on the bridge that should be looked at as well – **Mr. Fleming** said he will look into that too; he has serious concerns over the safety of that bridge. Replace or fix is in question as well as a cost estimate. He added he is not aware of an executed grant, but **Mr. Houk** said he was told that it was completed and ready for next year. Mr. Fleming will check with Mark Mandenburg, PRD's Trails Program Technical Designer.

Land Use Order - Draft Document – **Mr. Fleming** said there are a few areas in question that he would like to see clarified on jurisdiction between FRD (Forest Resources Division), PRD and LED. He said he will let the group know if any more changes have been made in the language.

Mr. Lucas provided a handout and summarized their Groomer Driver Workshop and provided financial information from last season. At Benzie's Snowbird's Clubhouse Volker's Implement Sales demonstrated equipment and discussed preventative maintenance. There was also a hands-on portion with equipment. He added that funding for this program comes from the sale of trail permits and encouraged the group to spread the word – it is critical for the success of the program and quality trail system.

Mr. Lucas also said they would like to see the seven tractors to rollover up to ten tractors a year – to keep 25% of equipment under full warranty, as well as one new tractor per grant sponsor. **Mr. Manson** would like to see a formal request brought to SAW. **Mr. Fleming** suggested having a separate meeting before the next meeting to continue this discussion. **Chair Murray** would still like to see that information in writing and asked Mr. Lucas to furnish that information to the Equipment Subcommittee members.

Review of Snowmobile Program Fiscal Year 2014 – **Ms. Blodgett** shared a financial summary with fund balances from close of 2013 through projected 2015. She reviewed appropriations, revenue and expenditures that showed fund balance currently, and into next year. Their estimate is conservative for revenue/sales. **Mr. Dickie** asked how

much revenue specifically came from the antique snowmobiles – **Ms. Blodgett** believes it is not much, but she will check and make sure that Secretary of State funding is actually being transferred.

Criteria for Priority Trails based on State Trail Plan – **Mr. Manson** reported that at the last Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC) meeting they were directed to come up with a short list of priority trail connections that followed criteria suggested from Donna Stine, DNR Policy Coordinator. Each committee needs to come up with their criteria, and they need to discuss what they feel will apply to the priorities, which also needs to work with the whole Plan for each of the trails groups. He feels that there needs to be another group to do that, and as a subcommittee. Chair Murray and Mr. Manson will work on that as a committee of two. **Mr. Yesney** said he has criteria created already that he will share with them. **Chair Murray** asked for SAW to forward any ideas or comments. **Mr. Moore** added they should also refer to trail proposals in the handbook.

Setting dates and location for 2015 season – **Chair Murray** suggested looking at the December meeting first. His recommendation is December 3rd (time and location to be decided later). Groomer workshop is March 5, 6, 7 and 8 at the Kewadin Casino in Sault Ste. Marie, so that SAW meeting will be March 5th. June meeting will be the 23rd and October meeting will be the 13th. Locations for June and October to be determined.

STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Olson, Chief of PRD mentioned that Mr. Moore will be retiring January 16th, and he wanted to recognize Dan and his contribution to the DNR and the snowmobile program over the years. He also made mention and recognition to Mr. Yesney and welcomed him back as well. He added that the Trail Plan has been a great achievement towards becoming the Trails State. The UP will soon have a person working on real estate; an easement person that will also help the trails system as a whole. That funding is coming from General Funds. There will be a few additional trails staff working in local communities connecting trails in general. Supplemental appropriations were attained for equipment after communicating with legislators who helped aggressively move that along.

Mr. Rick Brown asked about the transition between FRD and PRD regarding the snowmobile program. The snowmobile program will continue to be managed by PRD and they are continuing to work on transitioning the program. FRD's fire officers will no longer be handling state campgrounds in the spring. There still will be a partnership between divisions for snowmobile, but working together is still necessary. He feels the outcome should be consistent, so he wants to see that improve.

Mr. Fleming added that the point is to make the relationships work, no matter which division it is with. If there is a problem, that needs to be worked out. They are trying to be proactive and make any changes that need to be made. He wants to know of any problems with staff as he wants it resolved.

Mr. Bob Stein asked about railroads and the trail closed due to a crossing issue. Mr. Yesney said he'd tried to work that out, but it was just too costly for funding that was expected to be covered by the Canadian railroad. He said he will work on that again if Mr. Stein would like to make contact with him. **Chief Olson** suggested entertaining a different level of support to make it happen. Discussion continued on difficulties and challenges.

Law Enforcement – Cpl. Morey said that they have a draft of the updated Michigan Snowmobile Regulations pamphlet which will be available mid-December. Also, there had been many requests for online snowmobile safety classes, and Cpl. Morey provided a handout that summarizes student numbers over the past few years. This has been a popular option especially since volunteer instructors are at a minimum.

Mr. Yesney reported on Trail 160 north of Ironwood – there is a bridge issue there, but the bridge actually needs replaced. Funding has been difficult due to a ten year ownership. He would like input on what to do. It is strictly a replacement for the snowmobile trail.

Motion was made by Mr. Manson, seconded by Mr. Britton to waive the ten year rule as long as wording in the contract states that the snowmobile program would retain ownership of the bridge for ten years along with the ability to access the property to remove the bridge. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Mr. David Low referred to last months' MSA article titled "It's the Law" regarding snowmobiles riding on roads. This was taken directly from the DNR website. The question he is raising is not mentioning the unplowed portion. He would like clarification on this. **Cpl. Morey** clarified the language, but Mr. Low still does not like the wording 'open portion' (but on county roads it needs to be unplowed portion). **Chair Murray** will look into that and perhaps do a follow-up and clarification in the MSA magazine.

Mr. Manson has one question regarding a draft Best Management Practice (BMP) policy given to MTAC members. This would refer to logging around trails. He asked Mr. Fleming if it has been approved. Mr. Fleming has not heard of any progress, so Mr. Manson would like it on the next Agenda for discussion. Mr. Fleming will also check with Dennis Nezich, FRD Field Coordinator.

Chair Murray thanked Chief Olson for coming to the meeting and wished everyone a safe and happy season.

Motion was made by Mr. Lucas, seconded by Mr. Britton to adjourn the meeting at 12:00 noon.

DRAFT